

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT UK EI
SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE LEADER COURTS ULSTER UNIONISTS

CONGEN BELFAST DRAFTED THIS MESSAGE JUNE 20.

SUMMARY: THE HIGH POINT OF MRS. MARGARET THATCHER'S SURPRISE VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND JUNE 18-19 WAS A SPEECH IN BELFAST CLEARLY INTENDED TO PLEASE ULSTER UNIONISTS AND OBTAIN THEIR SUPPORT. CORRESPONDINGLY, THE THRUST OF HER REMARKS CONTRADICTS THE POLICY AIMS OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC AND NI'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY. MOST IMPORTANTLY, SHE COMMITTED HERSELF TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN NI'S TIE TO GREAT BRITAIN, RATHER THAN MOVE TOWARD AN AGREED IRISH UNIFICATION. END SUMMARY.

1. MRS. THATCHER SPOKE TO AN AUDIENCE OF AFFLUENT BUSINESSMEN AT A LUNCHEON SPONSORED BY THE OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY. THE SUBSTANCE OF HER RELEVANT POINTS:

(1) CONSERVATIVES AND UNIONISTS ARE TOGETHER IN MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING THE UNION. THE IDEA OF A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEDERAL IRELAND, PUT FORWARD BY SDLP AND IRISH LEADERS, IS OUT: IT WOULD WEAKEN THE UNION.

(2) THERE IS NO SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC AND NI (THE UK AND IRISH REPUBLIC ARE "TWO SOVEREIGN STATES WITH A COMMON LAND FRONTIER"), WHICH IS A BELIEF SHARED BY MANY UNIONISTS. BUT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD USEFULLY DISCUSS SECURITY COOPERATION,

PARTICULARLY THE NEED FOR THE GOI TO EXTRADITE TERRORISTS TO NI.

(3) THE LANGUAGE WAS NOT THAT EXPLICIT, BUT MRS. THATCHER APPEARED TO FAVOR THE UNIONISTS' PITCH RECOMMENDING ONE OR MORE STRONG, DIRECTLY ELECTED REGIONAL COUNCILS, WHICH WOULD BRING NI LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LINE WITH THE REST OF THE UK. HER LANGUAGE WAS MORE AMBIGUOUS ON MAJORITY/MINORITY RIGHTS: "THERE WILL BE SCOPE FOR ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE NEW INSTITUTIONS." ONE OBSERVER SAW A HINT AT POWER SHARING/PARTNERSHIP, BUT IT COULD MEAN THE OPPOSITE.

(4) CONTRARY TO THE IMPLIED LISTLESSNESS OF LABOR, THE TORIES WILL FULLY SUPPORT UNIONIST DEMANDS FOR AN INCREASE IN NI'S REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER.

(5) IN AGREEMENT WITH THE APPROACH OF MANY UNIONISTS AND OTHERS--GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE--IN NI, MRS. THATCHER WOULD "LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE THROUGH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES" WHETHER TO FORCE NI'S "EXCELLENT GRAMMAR SCHOOLS" INTO A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM, AS MINISTERS HERE ARE TRYING TO DO.

(6) ALMOST EVERYONE IN NI, HOWEVER, WILL APPLAUD THE CONTINUATION OF "SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE" TO NI INDUSTRY.

2. COMMENT: AS SEEN FROM BELFAST, SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NI AIREY NEAVE MAY HAVE BEEN MORE EXPLICIT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIS COURTSHIP OF THE UNIONISTS, BUT MRS. THATCHER'S INTERVENTION IS MORE AUTHORITATIVE--FOR WHATEVER A PRE-ELECTORAL COMMITMENT IS WORTH. BELFAST'S ESTABLISHMENT "NEWS LETTER" SAID MRS. THATCHER TOLD HER AUDIENCE WHAT THEY WANTED TO HEAR, AND LEFT NO DOUBTS IN THEIR MINDS.

3. IN ULSTER'S ZERO-BASED POLITICS, GENERALLY WHAT DIRECTLY FAVORS UNIONISTS DIRECTLY CONTRADICTS THE AIMS OF THE NI MINORITY AND OF THE GOI: THE FIRST FOUR POINTS ABOVE ARE DISTINCTLY OFFENSIVE TO THE LATTER. THUS THE "IRISH NEWS" APPROVINGLY CITED LIBERAL MP JOHN PARDOE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE VISIT AS DESPICABLE. THE NEWS ALSO WARNED OF THE DANGER TO BRITISH POLITICIANS OF BECOMING DEPENDENT ON ONE SIDE IN IRISH POLITICS.

BREWSTER

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